

GRADING SERVICES FOR THE FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Dairy Grading Branch offers many services on a voluntary, user fee basis that help provide the assurance of wholesome and high-quality milk and dairy products. The Dairy Standardization and Grading Branches work together to offer assistance with inspecting and grading dairy products.

Dairy products play a vital role in food service operations.

- ☆ Essential for a well-balanced diet
- ☆ Ingredient in many dishes
- ☆ Provide the excellent flavor consumers desire
- ☆ Many varieties of dairy products available

Those involved with food service programs need to know the product characteristics and their potential uses.

Successful use of dairy products in food service depends upon correct purchasing, handling, storage, and serving of these products. Dairy products are perishable, so careful selection and quality control take on added importance.



QUALITY

Everyone seeks top quality in the products they buy, and AMS can help with that buying decision. The Dairy Standardization Branch has established standards or specifications for many dairy products. Products are inspected and graded according to quality and appearance. When selecting by specific grade, you can expect uniform and consistent taste, feel, appearance, and color of the product.

Before a dairy product can even be inspected, the processing plant must meet USDA requirements for quality and sanitation. A USDA dairy inspector checks basic plant sanitation, incoming raw products, and processing procedures.

Wholesomeness

Grading According To Grade Standards Or Buyer's Specifications

Products may be graded based on USDA's standards or customers may buy products based on their specific standards. USDA can assist in developing specifications for a food service program. Product evaluation may be tailored to fit a group's particular needs. The group sets the standards for the product, and USDA will evaluate the product according to what is requested.

AMS dairy services can direct food service programs to processors who use the USDA grading system. Buying from recognized companies saves time while assuring consistent high quality in the purchased products.

Grade Labels And Quality Assured Shields



SERVICES AVAILABLE

Lot Evaluation: AMS services can be used to inspect the actual supply of products that are bought. For example, a manufacturer's lot, a truckload, or each shipment from a particular processor can be inspected and graded. AMS can inspect any dairy product supply that a food service program is interested in purchasing.

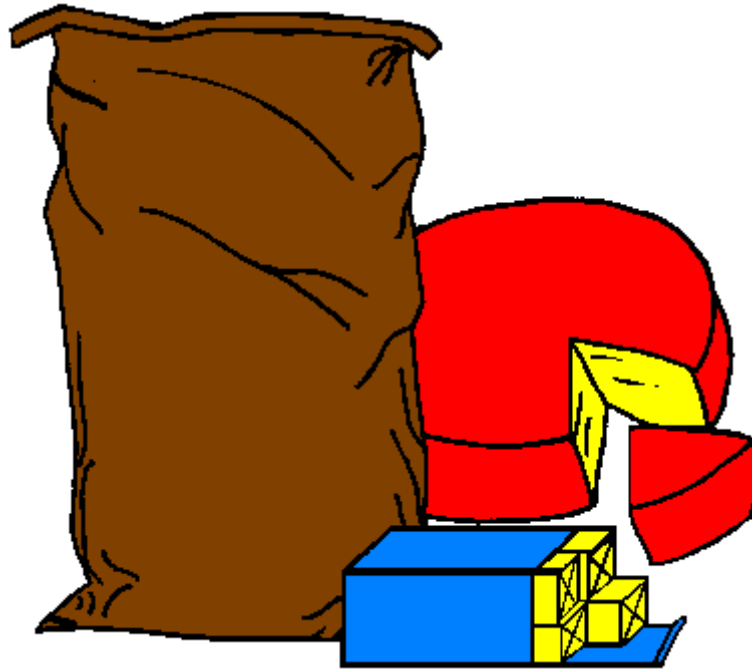
Compositional Analysis: Laboratory service consists of analytical and quality control tests. Services include all chemical and bacteriological determinations needed to evaluate class, quality, condition, and keeping properties.

Condition of Container: AMS also checks the condition of the packaging to be sure that containers properly protect the product and maintain its quality.

Test Weighing: AMS will weigh products to make sure that what was paid for was received.

Dispute Resolution: AMS acts as a mediator between the dairy plant and the buyer if there is a disagreement over quality, condition, or weight.

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For more information about USDA dairy services, write to: USDA/AMS/Dairy Division, Dairy Grading Branch, Room 2746-South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW - Stop 0230, Washington, DC 20250-0230, or call the Dairy Grading Branch at 202-720-3171, fax 202-720-2643, or e-mail at First name.Last name@usda.gov (for example: Duane.Spomer@usda.gov.)

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